



Over Prairie Trails Frederick Philip Grove

When Frederick Philip Grove settled in a remote area of Manitoba in the early years of the 20th century, he found work teaching in a school over 30 miles from his home. He commuted by horse-and-wagon or horse-and-sleigh each weekend, and seven of those long and challenging journeys are recorded in “Over Prairie Trails,” published in 1922. Grove has a sharp eye for details of nature that were of life-and-death importance to the lone prairie traveller — the shifting aspects of skies, wind, fog, and snow. On one level, the book is a treasury of documentary observation and nature writing. However, while Grove claims to offer a naturalist’s “plain truth,” we come to realize that he is creating a “tale” as much as a nature diary. He selects and arranges his material. Sometimes this means transforming his accounts into archetypal heroic journeys, casting himself as the Odyssean adventurer who battles his way through seas of snow and fog to return to his wife and child. At other times, his reports launch meditations on the nature of observation, consciousness, and the construction of meaning.

“Over Prairie Trails” is a landmark in Canadian writing, influencing the way nature — especially the Canadian winter— would be written about for decades to come. (Summary by Bruce Pirie)

Read by Bruce Pirie. Total running time: 05:52:09

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